

HER SPECIAL AVERSION.

BY FRANK LEE BENEDICT.



THE clock struck four. Kate Everton sprang up from her seat by the library fire, declaring that she had "an ocean of things to do," and must be excused.

The statement was addressed to her two favorite cousins, Jeanie Tracy and Foster Gwynne. The latter had arrived only a few hours before,

on his annual visit; but pretty Miss Jeanie lived with her maiden aunt in a cottage at the foot of the hill below the grounds of Everton Manor, and could hardly have told which of the two houses was most her home.

"I don't know where the day has gone," Kate continued, "and we haven't done half I wished to."

"Why, I'm sure I never spent so busy a New-Year Eve in my life," Gwynne declared. "We've been from the top of the house to the bottom at least forty times. I've not sat down till now since I got here."

"What might seem an idle day to anybody else would appear a busy one to Foster," cried Jeanie.

A laughing dispute began, and Kate left the pair to pursue it at their leisure, well aware that no excuse for leaving her guests was needed—even she would not be missed by either while they sat there together.

Kate went upstairs meditating on the numerous plans which had been eagerly discussed between herself and her cousins. Within a week, a large party of guests would arrive, and Kate was determined that, during the fortnight of her visitors' stay, the manor should be the gayest spot on the banks of the Hudson. The young princess owned a yielding mother, so was, of course, virtually the head of the house, though, be it said in her praise, she never allowed her supremacy openly to appear.

It was something new for the mansion to be occupied in the winter; but the two ladies had returned from Europe late in the autumn, and Kate decided to imitate English ways for once and make the country-house headquarters till Easter.

The trio had hardly found occupation enough to justify Gwynne's assertion; still, they had arranged sundry matters, examined the ball-room and conservatories, criticized the future guests, and been as thoroughly happy as they always were in each other's society.

Tableaus and charades were to have a place among the amusements, and Kate wished to look at the contents of several chests which she had ordered removed from the attics to a large light closet connected with her own rooms. She was expecting her special friend, Laura Ames, by the six-o'clock train, and wanted, that very night, to show her various rich dresses of bygone eras, and decide on pictures which they would suit.

There was one costume that Kate and Jeanie had vainly tried to make Foster remember. When they were children and played at being kings and queens, Kate always teased her mother for permission to wear it—a favor the good lady had very seldom granted. She found the treasure enveloped in soft linen and laid in a tray by itself, for the costume had memories connected with it which Mrs. Everton was romantic enough to prize.

The dress had belonged to her grandmother toward the end of the last century, when that lady was the reigning belle of New York. The first time she wore it, she met the man with whom she fell in love; and, as she was already engaged, great trouble arose out of this meeting. In this very attire, she had stopped a duel in Weehawken wood, between the two young gallants, and, heroine-like, at last got her own way about everything. At her wedding with the man of her choice, her former betrothed acted as chief groomsman—no wonder the chronicles of that period described her as an actual Circe!

Kate reflected a little on the story, shook her head doubtfully over her great-grandmother's freaks and adventures, and finally decided to essay the raiment.

She attired herself, and looked at the effect in the mirror—certainly the flowered damask robe was very becoming, made in the style of the Directory, with scant skirt, lace-bordered sleeves reaching just below the elbow, broad lapels, and a sash binding the waist.

Kate again shook her head, this time in doubt about the bonnet, but courageously put it on and tied its broad scarf in huge bows under her chin. A second study of the effect brought increased satisfaction.

She must show herself to Foster and Jeanie! Downstairs she skipped, in one of the madcap moods which varied her usually dignified demeanor in a way somewhat confusing to people who did not know her well. Intimate friends had long since pronounced Kate a bundle of such utter contradictions that, as impudent Foster Gwynne phrased the verdict: "It was really a wonder she could hold together."

Kate flew along the hall and down the side passage which ended in the library. As she reached the half-open door, she heard her mother's voice—then Foster's laugh as he answered something of which she only caught the closing words—"Compliments of the season."

No better cue could have been devised for an effective entrance. Another instant, and Kate was in the centre of the room, holding her dress in both hands and dropping a deep courtesy as she cried gayly:

"Same to you!"

"Oh, how perfectly lovely!" cried Jeanie Tracy.

"What an odd freak, my dear!" was Mrs. Everton's salutation.

"Bravo, Kate!" exclaimed Foster Gwynne.

"Thanks, Miss Everton!" added a fourth voice; these various utterances so nearly simultaneous that Kate had no time even to look up before these last tones were recognized as the most unwelcome which could have met her ear at this precise moment.

It would have been humiliating enough to be surprised by any outsider in her undignified escapade; but that Horace Danforth, of all people, should prove the witness thereof, was too much to endure tranquilly.

Yet bear it she must, without faltering either, and fortunately Kate's wits could act quick as lightning. There he stood—her special aversion—tall, saturnine, satirical; hoping, she was sure, to enjoy the sight of her discomfiture. Ah, he would be deprived of that pleasure!

She moved toward him, growing a little pale—her fortunate peculiarity at junctures when another girl would have blushed—and extended her hand with a regulation smile on her lips.

"I am glad my first greeting was a good wish, Mr. Danforth," she said. "It is entirely my cousin's fault that it proved so uncere-

monious; he told me you could not reach us until quite late in the evening."

"I suppose he must be held free from blame," the visitor rejoined; "for, though he gave me leave to come by the first train possible, I was sure I could not start till night."

He was quite his usual composed self, with a real indifference always apparent under his cordial manner; at least, Kate elected to believe this the case, and had long before decided that the man was antipathetic to her from the core of her heart, with his high and mighty air of disapproval, as if secretly wondering what men universally found in her worth admiring so much.

While these thoughts flashed swift as electric gleams through Kate's mind, she was making an appropriate answer to the visitor's last remark.

"And you know mamma and I are only too ready to share in that bad Foster's pleasure that you were able to change your mind," she said.

"Of course he does," cried Gwynne.

"You see, Miss Everton, my modesty is spared the necessity of answering," added Danforth, quietly.

Positively, the man was worse than ever—and she standing there, in that absurd array, to endure the inspection of his critical eyes!

"I came to show Foster my great-grandmother's gown," she said, with a laugh like a silver bell. "It is to be worn in one of our tableaux. My cousin says you have consented to take part—so I've the satisfaction of knowing I shall see you in a dress just as unbecoming."

"Why! it is the prettiest thing I ever saw," cried Gwynne, "and suits you wonderfully—doesn't it, Dan?"

Kate fancied that the gentleman hesitated an instant, thereby rendering his complimentary reply an impertinence.

"I am at last convinced that our great-grandmothers had good taste in dress," he said.

"How I wish they could be made happy by hearing your verdict!" retorted Kate. Then, afraid that her sneer had been perceptible, she was forced to sacrifice dignity and go back to her frolicsome rôle by way of offering amends. She caught her dress in both hands again, dropped a fresh courtesy, and disappeared.

"She is handsomer than ever—eh, Dan?" cried Gwynne, enthusiastically.

"Doesn't he spoil her dreadfully, Mr. Danforth?" demanded Mrs. Everton.

The visitor's answer was a bow to the mother and a smile in the cousin's direction.

"He certainly is more unendurable than ever," was Kate's mental comment, as she rushed upstairs. "I would not have believed it possible—but he is."

The pair had seen a great deal of each other during the last two years, yet Danforth would have declared that Miss Everton remained a hopeless puzzle to him, and Kate have vowed that, save for his being her pet cousin's college-chum and dearest friend, the gentleman did not exist for her; but he was her special aversion, all the same.

However, she had no further leisure to bestow on Horace Danforth. Waiting in her rooms, she found Mrs. Boothe, the mistress of the nursery in Kate's childish days, who had elected, when her charge grew up, to act as lady's-maid, thereby retaining more authority over Miss Everton than any other human being could boast. Nursey was not over-pleased at the confusion in which she had found the trunks of costumes; but her young mistress's prettiness in the flowered robe and quaint bonnet speedily appeased her, for Nursey was too sensible to waste time in being cross when any pleasanter occupation offered. Kate dressed in haste to drive to the station.

"Jeanie cannot venture out in the night air; and, if Foster goes, Mr. Danforth must," she thought. "I'll not put up with that." And added aloud: "Nursey, I shall go down the covered way to the stables and get into the carriage. Those two men would think they must escort me, and I don't want them."

"Laws! Miss Kate dear—I'm sure you couldn't have a pleasanter gentleman than Mr. Danforth. Now, I like him—"

"Well, I want Laura to myself for a little," broke in Kate, mentally marveling what spell that man, who seemed so unconscious of her own claims to admiration, cast over all the people about her and made them persistently sound his praises, from mamma to Nursey. "And I wonder you can put a stranger before your pet—Master Foster Gwynne. You are growing very inconsistent, Nursey."

"Not I," retorted the old woman. "And I ain't blind, neither, Miss Kate dear. And why you always seem—"

"There's the clock! Heavens, I shall be late!" cried Kate. And away she dashed, followed by Nursey's warnings as to the necessity for keeping her throat well wrapped up.

Kate reached the stables without encountering either of the gentlemen—a piece of good-fortune which so thoroughly restored her amiability that she did not even grumble over the delinquencies

of the weather. New-Year Eve though it was, the ground had not a sufficient covering of snow to warrant getting out a sleigh—she was forced to drive ignominiously in a covered carriage.

She had some time to wait at the station, and, after all, the train did not bring the expected visitor; but a telegram was handed to her which explained the mystery.

Miss Ames's father had selected that special day, of all others, as an eligible opportunity to frighten his family half to death. He fell on the ice in Boston Common—where he had no earthly business to go—and was carried home insensible. The doctors soon brought him round, however, and it was discovered that he had suffered no special injury beyond a sprained ankle.

Of course, Laura had been unable to start as she intended; but, as a simple sprain was not a reason for a man's requiring the attendance of his entire family many days, she hoped soon to be with her friend—though Miss Ames explained her parent's disaster and her own intention in prettier-sounding phrases than I have employed.

As Kate crossed the waiting-room, on her way back to the carriage, she had the surprise of running full against Horace Danforth; worse than this, his first words showed her that she was again placed at a disadvantage.

"Oh, Miss Everton, I am as glad to meet you as Robinson Crusoe was the man Friday!" he exclaimed. "Foster said you were coming to the station, and would bring me; but you were gone before I knew."

"I owe you a thousand pardons!" she cried, horrified that she could be supposed to fail in any matter of hospitality. "Indeed, I did not hear a word about your wanting to come. It is all Foster's fault."

"Nobody's fault," he interrupted, laughing. "I waited for the carriage to drive up, and found you had gone out by the stables; so I took the short-cut over the hill, glad to stretch my legs, and certain I should get here before the train could arrive."

"I never dreamed of your wanting to come," she cried.

"And naturally didn't care to have either of us stupid men interfere with your first meeting with your special friend," he said, still laughing.

"But I would not have forced you to walk, I hope you believe!" she rejoined, earnestly, yet with a slight accent of surprised question which held a ring of annoyance.

"I can imagine nothing that would make you other than a perfect hostess," he replied, in the slow languid tone which had so often inexpress-

ibly irritated his impetuous listener. "With me, I know you would be especially punctilious."

The cool assurance of the creature! Internally Kate was raging, but she said in her sweetest voice:

"Of course, since you are my favorite cousin's dearest friend."

"That is an ingenious reason, but it's not the one I meant," returned he, lazily as ever. "And the train is in. Your friend—"

"Has been delayed," Kate rejoined, as he paused. "The carriage is waiting by the back platform."

He offered his arm, and she took it mechanically, hearing his voice as they walked on, but deaf to his languid remarks about the unseasonable weather.

"You are dreadfully disappointed," he said, as they reached the carriage. "I am sorry Miss Ames failed you."

Kate explained the cause of her friend's detention. Then, as they drove off, she continued, with her usual directness:

"I was wondering over your odd remark, Mr. Danforth. What did you mean by an ingenious reason?"

"I should have said a polite one. I'm always a clumsy talker," averred he.

"You should say exactly what you mean, and you shall!" rejoined Kate, laughing, but plainly determined to have an answer. "Mr. Danforth, what was your private way of phrasing my reason? I insist on hearing!"

"Then, of course, I must put it into words as well as I can—excuse their bluntness! I know that you only tolerate me because I am Foster's friend; in fact, your not liking me is so active a feeling that one might use a stronger term. There—I'm frank enough to suit even your demand, I should hope."

He spoke rapidly, for him, and ended with another laugh. Kate knew it was not one of enjoyment, but, instead of striking her as a covert sneer, as was usually the case with his laughter, it sounded as if meant to show that he was not hurt or annoyed.

"I am sorry," she began, and stopped short.

"For not liking me?" he asked. "Why, that is my fault or misfortune. You can't blame yourself any more than my for eyes being gray instead of brown. You don't like gray eyes. You said so once."

"You seem to have a remarkable faculty for interpreting my thoughts and remembering the things I should have left unsaid," she replied, at once vexed and amused, yet liking his candor much better than the politely insincere speeches

and veiled disapproval which, according to her view, he had always hitherto bestowed on her.

"It is not surprising," he said, after a little pause. His voice was indolent as ever; but the lamp showed Kate that his eyes were fixed on her with an intentness which somehow held a kind of magnetic power. "It is not surprising, because your opinion is of importance to me. You see, from the first I liked you very much, Miss Everton."

Kate broke the magnetic spell by averting her head, and again up surged her odd antagonism.

"How good of you to take so much trouble, Mr. Danforth!" she cried, so playfully that the words might easily have passed for idle persiflage. "How shall I thank you?"

"By believing what I say," he replied, in tones which sounded almost severe.

"Hey! he-e-y!" shouted a voice from the roadside. The carriage stopped, Danforth let down the window, and the voice continued: "That's you, Miss Kate—I knowed your carriage! For the land's sake, give a body a lift home! I'm jest played out—that's the truth!"

The speaker was Ann Jemima Saunders, the village seamstress—who, of course, gained the desired admittance; and the pair had the pleasure of her society to Everton Manor, because it appeared that she had promised to spend the night there with the housekeeper, whom fate had made her elder sister.

The next morning proved sufficiently beautiful to be gladly accepted as an omen for a happy year, and, as it chanced to be Sunday, of course its programme in a well-regulated household was easily laid down.

"And ours is well regulated—on this one day, thanks entirely to mamma," Kate announced at breakfast. "Cousin Jeanie and I mean to walk to church; mamma will take the carriage. You two gentlemen can walk or drive, as you please; but you will go to church—that is my mother's dictum."

"Good gracious—Kate!" ejaculated Mrs. Everton, an exclamation which her daughter's vagaries brought forth at least twenty times each day.

"The energy with which the dictum was uttered is peculiarly Kate's own," added Jeanie.

"Whenever Kitty wants to be especially dictatorial, she always puts the brunt on her poor little mater," cried Gwynne. "Dan, do you mean to give in?"

"I always go to church, and I always walk—I promised my mother that I would," Mr. Danforth asserted, with the air of a man who defied contradiction.

Gwynne was guilty of the enormity of an audible whistle; little dainty Cousin Jeanie laughed outright, and Mrs. Everton followed suit.

"Mr. Danforth," said Kate, grave as ever, "I must beg you to believe that Foster Gwynne is wholly to blame for the unbecoming levity shown by Miss Tracy and her aunt; allow me to apologize for my family."

Of course, there was a general shriek at this absurdity, and Horace Danforth told himself that he had gained at least one step by his attempt at frankness on the previous evening—for the first time in their apparently amicable intercourse, Miss Everton had addressed him as one might an intimate friend.

The path across the fields was frozen hard; the sun shone; the air was just exhilaratingly fresh; and, altogether, the young people's walk proved most enjoyable.

It was not surprising this should have proved the case with Jeanie Tracy and Gwynne, devoted lovers since childhood; but Kate would hardly have predicated such a result for herself and her companion. She was anxious to make amends for her unintentional discourtesy, and forgot to seek occasions for taking offense at what she called his grandly disapproving air. They chanced on subjects of conversation interesting to both, and, during service, Kate actually found herself looking forward to the return walk with satisfaction.

She did not, however, find the expedition so agreeable as she expected; for a neighbor joined them soon after they left the church-yard. Danforth at once fell back in line with the two cousins—for which they were not grateful—and Kate was forced to listen to worthy Mr. Herbert's platitudes with such patience as she could muster:

"You needn't have left me to that tiresome creature's mercy, Mr. Danforth," she said, when the manor-gates were reached and the neighbor had passed on.

"I did just what I thought you would wish me to do," he answered. "You remember what I said last night. May I ask you a question, Miss Everton? It is impertinent, perhaps—but special days ought to give special privileges."

"Consider that they do, then," Kate answered, playfully, though she felt her color rise.

"Why have you always disliked me?" he asked, bluntly.

"Have I?" Kate questioned, mischievously.

"I am quite in earnest. I want to know where my fault lies," he persisted, grave as a judge. "I told you I liked you—"

"Then why do you always act as if you disapproved of everything I say or do?" she interrupted, hotly.

"Good heavens! how could you so strangely mistake—" The sentence, begun with such impetuosity that Kate fairly started, was left unfinished. After an instant, he added in an odd repressed tone: "Miss Everton, it is New-Year—let us make a bargain: try to learn to tolerate me—no, to give me a place among your friends—and I will do my best to prove how greatly I shall prize the distinction."

He held out his hand, and Kate gave him hers. Just then, Gwynne and his companion halted, and the pair were obliged to join them.

This was the beginning of a very quiet week, but so pleasant to Kate that she was ashamed at its close to discover how little leisure she had found to regret Laura Ames's detention or to grow impatient for the day which would bring the gay coterie of friends who were expected on a fortnight's visit.

Fortunately, snow had fallen, and the sleighing became tolerable, the lake—that special pride of the county—in capital condition for skating, and, altogether, Kate felt in the best of spirits when the important sixth arrived.

Two huge sleighs were in requisition to meet the guests; Jeanie and Gwynne drove to the station in one, while Kate and Danforth went in the other at Gwynne's suggestion.

"I propose this," he said, with his usual impertinence, "partly because it looks absurd to be followed by an empty sleigh—partly because I want a last chance to warn Jeanie as to her behavior before company."

The dash over the glittering snow made a charming close to Kate's week of unexpected pleasure.

"I haven't bothered you with questions," Danforth said, as they neared the station, "but—"

"I hear the whistle—the train will be in by the time we reach there!" cried Kate. "Oh, I beg your pardon—well, that 'but'?"

"Are we friends? Will you let me feel that you remember we are, however much occupied you may be with all these people?"

Kate had only time to answer by a glance and an affirmative monosyllable, for the sleigh drew up at the platform and the express was already in sight. There were twenty guests; this first evening, was to be ushered in by a dance, to which everybody in the county, who could rank among the Evertons' acquaintances, had received invitations—and this was only the beginning. Amusements must be devised for

each separate day of the coming fortnight, so Kate had ample occupation on her hands. Of course, Jeanie Tracy and Gwynne were ready and willing to help, and excellent coadjutors they proved; but, in "her special aversion," Miss Everton found her most invaluable ally.

Already it seemed odd that she could ever have tried to persuade herself that he merited this name. Even in the midst of their hottest quarrels—and they usually quarreled at least once a day—the princess of the manor held firm to her friendship. The former title, however, remained of distinguishing him, for he had forced her to admit having bestowed it. He frequently styled himself "your dutiful S. A.," and, so far from being vexed, when Kate wished to show extra cordiality she would also employ the initials.

The fortnight proved a series of red-letter days; the guests unanimously declared that it was like living a chapter of some delightful English novel, and the consciousness of giving such pleasure caused Kate to blossom into unusual beauty.

The tableaux ranked among the chief successes, and the scene in which Kate wore her great-grandmother's costume was the most admired of all. Three weeks previous, had a seer prophesied that Horace Danforth would appear as her companion in the picture, Kate's scornful unbelief must have passed all bounds; yet this consummation came about, and did not even strike her as surprising.

The last day of the pleasant episode drew near. Another dance was arranged for the closing evening, and by universal request several of the finest tableaux were to be repeated.

All this time her father's sprained ankle and selfishness had kept Laura Ames a prisoner at home, and it would not have been in human nature to prove superior to jealousy and heart-ache while being forced to miss such ecstatic experiences as several of the visitors at Everton Manor described minutely in the commiserating letters they sent her.

Laura did not mean to be malicious; she only felt dreadfully cross, and required some outlet for her ill-humor. She wrote Kate that she was astonished to hear of the terms on which everybody declared the imperious princess now stood with her former special aversion. She had thought the matter over, however, and hit on a probable solution of the mystery.

"I am sure you propose to give him a good lesson that he will not readily forget," Laura went on, "and richly will he deserve it. I have heard a great deal about the gentleman lately,

and from excellent authority. He is even vainer and more conceited than you always thought. There are no limits to his arrogance and insolence! He boasts that no woman can resist him, and all the while he is engaged to a widow—did you ever hear of her?—a Mrs. Isabel Hansford. She is awfully rich—handsome, too; she has only lately come home from Europe. They say he treated her dreadfully, but she's so crazy about him that—"

Kate flung down the letter, no more able to think in grammatical English than Miss Ames had been capable of writing it in her haste.

Isabel Hansford? This was the name of the young widow who had, only the evening before, arrived on a visit to Mrs. Osborne in Newburg. This latter lady was an intimate friend of Kate's, and had promised to bring her to the dance.

How a dozen trifling incidents returned to Kate's mind! She remembered Danforth's being with her when Rose Osborne's note came. She had read it aloud, and he smiled so oddly that she asked if he knew Mrs. Hansford. She recollected his supercilious tone as he answered: "I used to, a little; but we have not met for a long time."

Then several people entered, and the conversation dropped.

Her special aversion! Kate Everton sat alone in her room, wrathful, pained—a prey to such varied emotions that she was able to shut her eyes to the feeling deepest and sorest of all. She had little time to meditate—the dressing-bell would soon ring; but she found leisure to arrange a programme whereby she meant to get the better of Horace Danforth.

So thoroughly satisfied was she with her scheme that she went down to dinner with blazing eyes, scarlet cheeks, and an amazing flow of spirits. Never had she behaved more graciously to her near neighbor, Mr. Danforth—that is, when she remembered to notice him; yet something in look, tone, or manner gave that gentleman a vague uneasiness which would have rapidly grown into defined trouble had he not been able to assure himself that it must be a fancy of his own restless spirit—she could have discovered no reason for offense in anything he had said or done.

Among the earliest of the evening guests were Kate's friend and her visitor, Isabel Hansford. Very lovely and prepossessing the young widow proved, with a sad expression in her face and a little melancholy ring in her voice which roused Miss Everton's quick sympathies.

"I am in dreadful trouble, Rose Osborne," said Kate. "I can't possibly appear in that

promised tableau—it comes so early that I shall have no time to dress. Oh, I do wish you could wear my costume—Mrs. Hansford could, but I don't dare ask her. You know—the tableau with Mr. Danforth."

"I'm sure Isabel would take your place—I'll see," returned her friend, and speedily brought the assent of which Kate had felt sure in advance.

As he dressed for his part in the tableau, Danforth congratulated himself that, during its arrangement and while waiting for the curtain to go up on the encore it was certain to receive, he could find time to obtain Miss Everton's assurance that his vaguely uneasy sensations had been wasted.

After all, he was rather late; and, as he hurried on to the little stage, he saw that the heroine of the tableau had already taken her place.

"I beg a thousand pardons, Miss Everton," he exclaimed, in genuine distress.

"We are in plenty of time. I was here in advance," a low voice answered.

The brocade gown, Directoire bonnet, and slender shape were all Kate Everton's, but the voice was one which Danforth had not heard for a long while.

"Horace," the tones continued. "I am so glad of this opportunity. I can speak freely to you, and I want to explain—"

But she could not then, for various people who were to appear in other tableaux began to hover about. Then the stage-manager, Mr. Gwynne, drove the intruders away and sternly ordered the "last century hero and heroine" to assume their rightful positions.

So it came about that Kate Everton had an opportunity to study the pretty picture in which she had several times played the prominent figure, and, to judge from the fixedness with which she gazed at the pair on the stage, the performance evidently possessed an extreme interest for her.

Soon after the tableaux were over, Isabel Hansford found an opportunity for the conversation with Horace Danforth which she had been so desirous of holding. The pair were hidden for nearly half an hour in the conservatory, and, when they emerged, the widow's face had lost the tinge of melancholy which had excited Kate Everton's sympathy.

Miss Everton could see this for herself, as she had been to peep into the dining-room, and returned just as the two came out from their retreat, though she was so completely concealed by a great stand of plants that neither saw her.

She could not catch sight of Danforth's face, for it was bent on his companion; but, as they passed, Kate heard him say:

"My dear Isabel, I am very, very glad; and my own happiness, which—"

He bowed still lower to finish his sentence, then the two moved on. Kate's head was in a whirl, and a sensation which she tried to believe only anger and mortification surged like flame across her heart. During these last days, this man had overstepped the limits of friendship; he had plainly shown a wish to convince her that she had touched the tenderest and strongest feelings of his nature. He was, indeed, a deliberate coquet; that meanest of created beings, a male flirt! Either he loved Mrs. Hansford, or he was attracted by her money. An estrangement there had certainly been, and to amuse himself he had tried to make an impression on her, Kate Everton!

Oh, if there were only some way to punish him! But she was a woman, and therefore helpless. Indeed, there was no space even to indulge in angry thoughts or wishes. The music floated out to where she stood. People were walking up and down the great entrance-hall. She heard herself inquired for. She must appear.

They were in the supper-room before Danforth found an opportunity to speak with her.

"What have I done?" he asked, softly, as he managed to get close to her side. "I should think you vexed, only that my conscience assures me you have no reason."

"Vexed?" she echoed. "I don't understand, Mr. Danforth. I trust that you don't mean to leave us to-morrow, feeling that I have in any way failed in my duty as hostess during your stay. Vexed? Why, one is sometimes that with a relative or intimate friend, but it is a liberty one would not take with anybody else."

It was a long speech, but she uttered it rapidly and with an icy smile that made each word sting; then she was gone.

Nearly an hour later, Danforth, standing in the corridor, heard great confusion in the ladies' dressing-room. Cries, even shrieks, reached his ear.

He dashed upstairs and entered the apartment, to see several silly girls rushing aimlessly about and calling for help. In the centre of the room, trying to wrap a shawl about herself, stood Kate Everton, her dress in a blaze.

Danforth sprang forward, seized a heavy cloak, and folded it about her, while the silly girls shrieked more loudly. By the time other people reached the chamber, Danforth had extinguished the flames and was holding Miss Everton helpless in his arms—she had fainted.

The next morning, on account of several severe burns on her hands and arms and the

effect of a heavy cold which she had somehow caught, Kate was ordered by the doctor to keep her room and even remain in bed.

The breaking-up of the house-party had been set for that day, and Mrs. Everton was only too glad to see the guests depart. In the afternoon, Kate was feeling much better; and, when she learned that Isabel Hansford had driven over to inquire about her, she insisted on that lady's being allowed to come up to her room.

"So good of you to let me in," the pretty widow said, as she sat down by Kate's sofa. "Rose is ill with a cold, and we were both so anxious to have news of you."

"I shall be all right to-morrow," Kate averred. "I am so vexed at having performed in such a senseless way!"

"Oh, if it had not been for Mr. Danforth!" cried Mrs. Hansford.

This name, so often in her thoughts during the course of the morning, made Kate's blood tingle. It was dreadful to think that she owed him a debt of gratitude, and she had not even sent him a message before his departure.

"I hope you like him as much as he deserves," continued the little widow. "Oh, I want to tell you a secret. Rose has talked about you so much, that I feel as if I knew you really well."

"You are only too good," said Kate, sweetly. "and I dote on a secret. I'm a sybil, too: I prophesy that Mr. Horace Danforth has a part in yours."

"Yes. Oh, I suppose I behaved very ill; yet I'm not really a flirt," pursued the widow. "I dare say Rose has told you that I was engaged to Horace's half-brother. Well, we quarreled last year. I only lately found out that I was in the wrong; but now it's all set straight. Horace has sent him word, and he will be in Newburg this evening."

They were interrupted by the entrance of Nurse Boothe, and Mrs. Hansford soon took her leave. Kate sank back among her pillows, glad to be alone. She was full of penitence and remorse, and how to make amends seemed very

difficult. If only, this morning, she had sent him some message; at least, Foster was still in the house—she could tell him.

In the dusk of the evening, she dressed and went downstairs; she was so much better, that, when she proposed doing so, Nursey had not the heart to refuse. Her mother was in her room, the butler informed her, and Miss Tracy and Mr. Gwynne had gone for a walk sometime before.

Kate passed on into the library: as she opened the door, the thought of her entrance there on New-Year Eve flashed across her mind. How long ago it seemed! How much she had lived through since then!

She heard a movement, a hasty exclamation, and out from the shadow came Horace Danforth.

"Oh, I never dreamed of seeing you!" he cried. "I only went as far as Newburg—I drove over to hear how you were. Oh, Miss Everton, won't you tell me what I had done—"

"First, let me thank you," she interrupted, and hurried impetuously on. "I want you to forgive me also. Will you do that?"

"Forgive you?" he echoed. "Oh, I have been nearly wild! I thought you had grown to like me, and—and— Oh, Kate, I must speak! I love you! I have loved from the first moment we met. I know you only care for me as a friend; but, at least, let me be that—"

His incoherent sentences came suddenly to an end. Kate Everton had done what few people had seen her guilty of since she grew up—burst into tears.

It was a full half-hour later when Jeanie Tracy and Gwynne came in from their walk. They found the pair still sitting among the shadows; but they were too quick-witted to need light to make matters clear to their comprehension.

Danforth remained at the house that night, and his luggage was brought back.

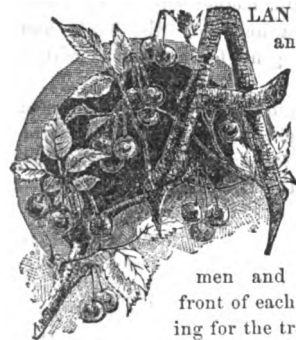
"I suppose," said impudent Gwynne, "that Kate wants you to stay because she would feel lost if she were deprived of her special aversion."



NICHOLAS CLEEVER'S MONEY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'THE SECOND LIFE.'

CHAPTER I.



LAN Parker paced up and down the outer waiting-room of the Pennsylvania Railway Station in Philadelphia, impatiently watching the clock. Long queues of men and women stood in front of each closed gate, waiting for the trains that were to take them to the South, California, or New York.

Doctor Parker, at each turn, eyed furtively one of these lines stationed before a gate placarded "Germantown"; his glance was that of a man watching for somebody, and ashamed to be seen so watching. Twice he started hurriedly to the stairs, as if resolved to give up the attempt; but each time came back reluctantly, flushed and angry with himself, scanning eagerly the crowd of sober matrons and business-men, hoping to find that the person whom he sought had joined them in his momentary absence.

He was angry at himself: a new sensation in his well-ordered, quiet, busy life—a life too full of study and experiments to leave any room for morbid meditations on Alan Parker and his doings. But this watch of his, he told himself now, was a silly sentimental freak.

"I am spying and following a woman whom I do not know, and, in all human probability, never shall know. It is the act of a fool and a cad. The 'gents' who boast in pool-rooms of their 'best girls' might do such a thing. If a man did it to my sister, I should knock him down!"

He buttoned his coat hastily and turned again to go away. But, at the moment, a tall slight figure in a brown ulster and close-fitting cloth cap joined the crowd in front of the Germantown gate. Doctor Parker stopped short.

He would not watch her! Because a woman was born with extraordinary beauty, and looked like a benign angel who had come down to go about blessing the world—was she to be dogged by every impertinent fellow who chanced to see her in the street?

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His blood flashed hotly with shame. He was no impertinent cad! But his feet unconsciously carried him into the crowd which pressed close behind her. The gate was opened; she was pushed on toward it. Great heavens! How could they touch her? That fat woman with a basket, who shoved her to one side! To him, it was sacrilegious as though she had shoved the Blessed Virgin. Fat and lean men, women with packages, and women with babies pushed him also toward the gate—there was a moment's colloquy with the keeper, and he was through, rushing after the brown cloth cap, which he saw dimly in the crowd before him, with a vague idea that she needed protection. A few minutes later, and he was seated in the back part of the car which held her. It was late in a September afternoon. The train was filled with men of business going out to their homes in Germantown, and with their wives and daughters hurrying home after a day's shopping. It was like a gay family party. They nodded and smiled to each other as they took their seats or lingered gossiping in low voices, standing in the aisle.

Alan noticed that his lady of beauty was known to many of these people. He fancied that the eyes of even the most trivial and vulgar among them softened as they were turned on her. Why, even a dog would recognize the purity, the nobility, of that face!

The low afternoon sun struck upon it now. Had it been any other woman, he would have risen and pulled down the shade beside her. But he dared not do it for her. It would be an intrusion—forcing himself on her notice. A stout red-haired little man jerked down the shade, lifting his hat as she bowed, and turning away to talk to another man about natural gas. Natural gas! When she had smiled and spoken to him! Doctor Parker felt a chill of disgust, of actual nausea, as he stared at the man.

The train stopped every five minutes at one of the pretty way station-houses in the midst of rolling hills, dotted with gray stone villas and quaint cottages. Groups of passengers left the car at each station until it was nearly empty. But she kept her seat.

At last the conductor shouted Upsal! She rose, not gathering up untidy little packages

like the other women, but carrying a flat leather case, which was strapped compactly. She passed close by Alan, her ulster brushed against his seat and disclosed a neat foot cased in high boots. How dainty and complete she was, from the smooth coils of brown hair to the trig rubber sandals! What a home such a woman would make—orderly, refined, picturesque! It will be seen that she now no longer represented an estrayed seraph to him, but a perfect little housekeeper.

He followed her, almost against his will, out of the car, up the muddy depths of Johnson Street, and down a shady lane. She stopped at the gate of an old stone house, built by some of the German weavers who first settled the little town. The walls were thick enough to resist cannon-balls; the oaks and walnuts which gathered about them, shutting them in from the highway, were old when Penn was a ruffing youth, sowing his wild-oats in Paris.

Alan, standing afar off, saw the gate of this blessed place open to receive the woman who was so strangely set apart from all the world, to him.

As he stood looking intently at the house, a gentleman passed him, and, observing him curiously, paused.

"A fine bit of antiquity," he said. "You are fond of such things? One of the oldest houses in Philadelphia."

"Yes—very remarkable."

"It is in good preservation, too," continued the stranger. "The tenants are very courteous to antiquarians, as I myself proved. They are young people, named—"

"I beg your pardon," interrupted Alan: "I do not intend to intrude on them. I am not enough of an antiquarian to justify a visit."

He made a remark or two on the architecture of the old dwelling to soften his brusqueness, and then hurried away. He would not ferret out her name from a stranger. He had not fallen so low!

Doctor Parker resolved to walk home, to wear off his nervous excitement, and soon struck into the park. As he strode along with the steady swing of the practiced pedestrian, he thought over this escapade coolly. After all, why should he not follow this girl? He did it with the reverence a devout Catholic would feel to a saint.

The mere sight of her strengthened, uplifted him as the reading of a noble poem or a strain of music would do. "Heaven knows there is not so much in my life that is inspiring or sweet," he thought.

Then his mind swung slowly back from the

pretty girl to an experiment which he was making, that day, on the nerve-centres of a rabbit.

Alan Parker was a farmer's son, in New Jersey, born with a natural irresistible vocation for surgery. He worked his way through college and the medical school, and, after he was graduated, settled down on one of the narrow streets near the Naval Asylum, in Philadelphia, in hopes of finding practice. There were two doctors already in the block; but Alan saw their signs on the doors as in a dream, without an idea that they could in any way affect his success. In matters of business, he was a child—and always would be one.

His father was now dead, and he had no kinsfolk. He had but himself to care for. The clothes he had would last for a year or two. He rented two rooms in a small house for a trifle, and cooked his own meals. The half-dozen patients who came to him paid for his rent and food. Having thus reduced the necessities of life to the simplest conditions, he gave himself up with breathless zeal to his experiments upon the brain and nervous system. For three years, he had been working in the little house in St. Alban's Place, in the same direction as two of the great German specialists, but without results. Sometimes, he felt that he was on the verge of a great discovery; but the supreme moment passed—empty. He gained no more practice. Indeed, three of the six patients had called in Doctor Potts, round the corner. True, Alan had cured them promptly and thoroughly; but he was unpopular—Doctor Potts knew all of the babies in the neighborhood, and, when called in to minister to the father's rheumatism, chatted for an hour about Johnny's teeth and Paddy's weak stomach. Doctor Parker was in too great haste to return to the frog whose legs he had paralyzed, or to the pigeons that were hopping about with half of a brain, to talk family gossip.

It troubled him little that half of his patients left him. He ate meat but once, instead of twice, a week, and thought no more about it.

But it did trouble him that he had no companionship. As for Doctors Potts and White "et al," they cared nothing for his work in the gray matter of the brain. The books told them what dose to give Jimmy Brown for measles or old Quinn for his palsy: what more was there in medicine than that? And Alan knew none of the great specialists in the city, whose work was in the more obscure paths of science.

He could not spend his evenings talking ward politics and drinking beer with the club which

met over the grocery shop at the corner; neither could he take any comfort in the tawdry gentility of the grocer's daughters, to whom Potts had introduced him. He knew no better class of men or women. For two years, therefore, he had lived in the loneliness only possible in a great city.

A month or two ago, while walking down Broad Street, a young girl had passed him, who seemed to him different from any woman he had ever seen, just as the scent of white hyacinths was cleaner and purer and more vivid to him than that of any spring flower. He followed her, unconsciously, as he might have followed the hyacinths when carried before him. She took the Germantown car, and left him standing with a smile on his face. It seemed as if his whole heart and soul smiled as they had not done for years. In a few moments, however, he had forgotten her, as he had the blue sky of that morning or a song heard by chance. A week or two later, he accidentally met her again at the same hour and place. His life was singularly cold and barren; this was a keen pleasure. He fell into the habit of walking to the Broad Street Station every Tuesday at four o'clock, and always saw her. She, however, had never noticed him in the crowd.

To-day, as we have seen, he followed her to Germantown.

CHAPTER II.

"HELLO, Parker! Well, this is luck! I've been at your office twice to-day and missed you, and here you are!"

A thick-set, red-haired young man, whose clothes bespoke him the leader of fashion in some country town, hurried down the hill to the bank where Parker lay stretched by the river. It was Tom Anderson, one of his schoolmates in the Jersey village in which they both were born. Alan welcomed him eagerly.

"Bless my soul, boy, how altered you are! I never should have known you under that red beard." He put his hand on the stranger's shoulder affectionately, with a show of feeling rare to him. He had never been particularly fond of young Anderson, but just at that moment he represented to the lonely man his home and his youth.

Tom shook hands heartily enough, but he eyed the city doctor critically as he did it.

"His coat is old style. We haven't worn that cut in Perryville for two years. Parker's down on his luck, I reckon," ran his secret meditation, while he was talking briskly enough—re-telling Perryville gossip. He had come to

town with that certain awe of Alan, which youths of his stamp in country towns have for successful men in cities; but his tone, after inspection of the clothes, grew familiar, and at last patronizing.

"How do you make out here, Parker? Many patients?"

"Enough to keep me in bread and butter. Or, I ought to say, in bread and no butter," said Alan, laughing.

"That's bad! You could have done better than that at home. Caldwell began later than you did, in our county, and his practice runs up to two thousand on the books."

"I don't care so much for money," hesitated Parker. "I would prefer to stay in town, even without patients."

"Don't care for money?" The Perryville storekeeper stared at him, bewildered. "I don't know what you mean. What's there to care for?"

"It is better here, for a physician, than in the country. There are the libraries and hospitals and rooms for vivisection—a man can keep abreast with his time. There is a chance for experiments."

Anderson burst into a loud guffaw. "Why, ain't you done studying? You've got your parchment. Pshaw, Parker, you can't shut my eye! Who is she?"

Alan laughed again, stretching himself at full length on the grass. "You are too sharp, Tom. There is no woman in this case. I do not know one in Philadelphia, except my laundress and landlady."

"You're unlucky," said Tom, with an incredulous knowing nod. All Perryville had been wont to regard Parker as a rising man in the medical world, and the centre of a fashionable circle in Philadelphia; and Tom, when he came up to the city, had undefined hopes of being introduced to the unknown fine ladies and swell youths of whose doings he read in the society columns of the Sunday paper. He suspected, for a moment, that Alan was ashamed to present him to his friends. But a glance at his own new clothes and the blazing garnet pin on his blue satin cravat banished that fear. Parker told the truth, probably. He had not the dash or push to make a man of fashion.

"I'm sorry for you, Al," he said, good-humoredly. "Now, if you lived in Trenton, I know some high-flyers there, and could give you a boost socially. But I have never met any Philadelphians, unfortunately. Oh, by the way," he added, after a moment's pause, "I ran accidentally across a cousin of yours, to-day out on the West Chester road."

"A cousin of mine? I did not know I had a single kinsman living. You must be mistaken, Anderson."

"No. This is old Cleever. He has a little place near Media. Three or four acres and an old tumble-down house. Did you never hear of him?"

"Nicholas Cleever? A chemist? Is it possible that he is still alive? I used to hear my mother talk of his oddity. He was her cousin, and an old man when she was young."

"He's very much alive. A dried up old mummy who breathes, and may go on breathing for ages. You ought to look him up, Al, if you are so poorly off for relations."

"I will."

"I turned him up by chance. Had some oils to collect for the firm out that way, called at a few houses to leave samples—we handle the Magic Cultivator now—and so came across old Grampus. The minute I heard the name, I remembered your mother's story of how he used to loan single dollars to the school-boys at twenty per cent. interest. So I inquired, and it's the same old party. He has loaned dollars to some purpose, though. He's worth a million, they tell me," glancing sharply at Parker.

"A chemist in a country town would hardly amass such a fortune," said Alan, carelessly.

"He was an assayer, and took his knowledge out to California when the gold-fever began."

The two men were walking down the river road. Anderson observed that Parker's gait had quickened in the last few minutes, and that his eyes shone. "The very mention of old Cleever's money has put new blood into him," he thought. "I reckon you'll soon go out to hunt the old man up?" he said, aloud.

"Yes. Did you notice any likeness to my mother, Tom? She was a Cleever. You don't know what a surprise it is to me to find that I have a blood relation alive. I thought myself altogether alone in the world. It is a great pleasure."

"Yes," said Tom, dryly. "No doubt. Especially when the blood is backed by a million."

"What can that possibly matter to me? I suppose the man has an army of children and grandchildren. They will be my kinsfolk, too."

"No. He is a bachelor. You are probably his nearest relative."

"Poor old fellow! It is bad enough to be alone when one is young and has the days full of work. But in old age—I'll go out soon to see him."

"No doubt!" muttered Tom, again, with a significant nod. But his attention was distracted

now by the carriages and riders that passed them, hurrying back to town through the gathering twilight. Tom eyed the stately matrons and delicate young girls critically.

"Some very tony parties there, Al. And you don't know any of them?"

"Not one."

"Aha! Tommy Anderson would have made his way before now into the 'ton.' Well, perhaps it's as well you didn't. You've been faithful to the dreams of your youth, I suppose. 'For his heart was true to Poll.'"

Alan stared at him. "I do not understand you," he said.

"Victoria Walker is coming up to visit some friends in town, this winter. Do you catch on now?"

"I remember Victoria Walker—the baker's daughter in Perryville—though not distinctly. A fat little girl, with black hair in kinky curls. But what have I to do with her?"

"Ah-h! You sly heart-smasher!" slapping him on the back. "Victoria claims to be engaged to you. She wears a ring you gave her, and has some other love-tokens of yours."

"Absurd!" exclaimed Alan, angrily. "You forget, Anderson, that it is ten years since I left Perryville. The baker's daughter was then a child, and I an ignorant farm-boy."

"She's no child now, then. She's a bouncing black-eyed woman of twenty-four: red cheeks, black curls, weight a hundred and seventy—a regular armful of joy. You are old enough to marry now, you'll allow? So is she—and ready. I don't know, Parker, what claim she has on you, but she brags of an engagement, and letters which passed between you. She is coming up to town, and you will assuredly hear from her."

"Nonsense!" said Alan. "We can take a street-car here, if you would rather ride. You will spend the night with me?"

"No. I must catch the ten-o'clock train for Trenton. I'm sorry—I'd like to have seen your roost."

Alan went with him to the station, and saw him pass through the gate with a sense of relief. He had welcomed Tom as a part of his childhood. But how unendurable he was! Had he always been so pretentious and vulgar? Could it be possible that he himself had been a loud-mouthed braggart as a village-boy?

And this terrible woman who was coming—he shuddered as he hurried down the darkening street. It was with difficulty that he remembered her. But he did remember that her red cheeks and inky hair had seemed very beautiful

to his boyish eyes. "I was a young animal, with the instincts of an animal," he thought, savagely. There was a vague recollection of one evening, when the big precocious girl had sat next to the shy thin boy at singing-school, of an exchange of cheap rings, of a kiss given in the dark.

A chill of disgust nauseated him—he hurried on. No man, perhaps, is satisfied when his dead self, with its long-forgotten propensities and passions, rises to confront him. But, to Alan Parker, this episode of his boyhood seemed to belong to some other and lower world. A butterfly might so remember his slimy loves when he was a worm.

CHAPTER III.

THE light-brown figure which Doctor Alan Parker had followed with such awed reverence passed through the door of the old house into a low-ceiled wide hall. He fancied the seraphs had such beauty as hers. But very few people would give her credit for any beauty at all. There certainly was nothing seraphic in the firmly shut mouth and brown reasonable eyes disclosed when she took off her hat.

A plump baby-faced old lady met her at the door, shaking her head warningly. A young man was on his knees on the stairway inside, tacking on each step a strip of raveled earth-colored rag, and daubing on the front of each a line of scarlet paint. He sang a church anthem, meanwhile, at the top of his voice.

"Don't say a word, Beesy!" begged the old lady, in a whisper. "I told him you had just got the carpet paid for, and that we thought it so neat; but he tore it off. Here it is. I was trying to fold it up," pointing to a heap of carpet, mossy brown in color, and full of rents where it had been torn from the floor.

"Oh, is that you, Eloise?" called the eager workman, not pausing long enough to look around. "That was atrocious stuff you had put down. It tortured me. Look at the stairs now! There is a touch of art for you. Nothing but bits of coffee-sacks fringed! But see the welcome—the fervid tone of the two colors! It will meet a guest like an outstretched hand."

"I'm sure I'll break my neck over those rags, Thaddeus," whimpered his mother.

Thaddeus drove in a final tack with a victorious rat-tat-tat.

"Triumphant Zion! raise thy head," he sang, in time to the hammer. "Break your neck? Nonsense! It is amazing how dull you and Eloise are about art. I've been trying to educate you these two years. Now, look at

that," standing back by the door and viewing the stairs as rapturously as he might Raphael's Madonna. "Is it possible you do not see the feeling there?"

"It's very artistic, dear Thaddeus, I know," his mother piped. "But Louisa has been so long saving money to buy the carpet, and it only went down on Tuesday. It seems a pity, and that is so raggy—"

"Raggy? You have a work of art, instead of a strip of wool!" said Thaddeus, angrily. "There's no use in my sacrificing my time and thought to a lot of women who give me no thanks. I have appreciation everywhere outside of my own home."

"Nonsense, Thad!" his sister said, patting him on the shoulder good-humoredly. "Put up your hammer, and dress for dinner."

One of the lessons which Thad Rawley had tried to teach his womenkind, during the two years he had deigned to live with them, was the necessity of full evening toilette for dinner.

"It is indispensable in England," he told them a thousand times. "I once dined with Lady Boughton, quite *'en famille'*, and the ladies wore décolleté gowns, without exception."

"But Lady Boughton had not to run out and see to the chops, as poor Beesy has to do," whined Mrs. Rawley. "Prudy burns them to rags, and you're so particular, Thaddeus."

However, she put on her old black silk and lace fichu every day, and faced Thaddeus in his shabby evening-dress, to eat solemnly the chops or batter-cakes which constituted dinner in the Rawley mansion. Thaddeus was wont to eye Louisa in her all-day brown merino, with actual tears of vexation in his eyes.

"Why can you not be in harmony with the place and scene?" he would moan. "These things are trifles to you, but they sting me to the quick. I am not constituted like you. I am one throbbing nerve."

Sometimes, after Louise had cooked the meal—which, by the way, she had paid for—she would put on a pretty evening-dress, and sit in state at the table. She had great good-humor, and usually her temper gave way to her brother's uneasy whims, as soft sunny June air does to a darting gad-fly.

Mrs. Rawley had been left a widow with a small income; it was large enough, however, to support her in modest comfort, had her son been a commonplace man. He was, unfortunately, a genius—in the opinion, at least, of Thaddeus Rawley. Only the most expensive school, and, after that, Harvard College, could fitly prepare his intellect for its work in life. Neither at

school nor at Harvard was he treated with the consideration due to his sensitive nature. He left before graduation, and for three years was supposed to study law at the University. When his class came up for final examination, he suddenly left it, and declared that he meant to give his life to art, and art was a goddess only to be worshiped in Paris. Mrs. Rawley sent him to Paris. There he remained for two years. His devotion to art was of too lofty a character to permit him to try to earn any money. "You cannot serve that divinity and Mammon," was his maxim. Hence Mrs. Rawley, to support him, was compelled to sell her little store of jewelry, to withdraw Louise from school, and to move into an old house which she rented for a trifle.

Thaddeus suddenly returned from Paris, opened a studio in Philadelphia, the rent and equipment of which cost his mother one-third of her income. He seldom visited it. He had been at home now two years, and had not painted a picture. He was nursing his genius, he said, until it was strong enough for a flight that would astonish the world. To keep it in a healthy condition required plenty of flirtation with all the girls in the neighborhood, season tickets for the opera, velvet smoking-jackets, bric-a-brac, and dainty luncheons at the Bellevue. It never occurred to him to inquire where the money came from which paid for this costly diet for his muse. "I have a certain sensitiveness," he often said, "which shrinks from discussion of the dirty dollar."

It was quite another sensitiveness which hindered his sister from forcing it on his notice.

She and his mother were busy enough in such discussion just now. While Thaddeus retired to dress, they had shut themselves up in Louisa's little chamber and were counting over a very lean roll of bills which she took from her purse.

"They only paid a dollar apiece for the

pincushions, mamma. They say there is no demand for them now, and fifty cents for the knit sacques, and three dollars a dozen for the painted menus—"

"Hush—h! Thaddeus would be terribly mortified if he knew you were trying to paint, Beesy. Indeed, I don't think he would approve of your taking money for your work, anyhow—"

Beesy lifted her eyebrows, but laughed good-humoredly. "Now, there is the rent," she hurried on, "and here is the baker's money, and the milkman's—that leaves just two dollars."

"Dear, dear! I thought you could get a warm dress this month, Beesy! This is—" She put her hand on Louisa's shoulder, glancing over her faded thin gown with the tears in her eyes. "You've had it four years."

"Nonsense! It is very comfortable and pretty." She threw her arms about her mother. The laugh and the energetic hug restored Mrs. Rawley. It was not often that she spent her sympathy on Beesy. Was she not a commonplace girl, needing nothing more than ordinary women? It was Thaddeus, with his artistic nature, his innumerable longings, to whom poverty was a curse. It was he who needed a mother's sympathy.

"Only two dollars for all your materials and car-fare this month? And suppose poor Thaddeus wants to draw on you? I gave him all I had last week, and I very much fear it is gone."

"He will draw on a broken bank, I'm afraid. Who is that?" as the front gate clanged, and a bent shuffling figure crept up the path.

Mrs. Rawley peeped out between the curtains, and clasped her fat hands.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! It is your cousin, Nicholas Cleever, Beesy. He will stay for dinner, and what will Thaddeus say?"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

THE VALE OF SLEEP.

BY MINNIE C. BALLARD.

THE vale of sleep holds many a phantom,
And eidolon of living things;
But none so sweet as that dear spirit,
Thy dream-form, night to me oft brings.

In thine own shape it seems to hover
In distant lanes, or, drawing near,
Some sweet caress or kiss doth proffer,
Only than truth to me less dear.

And since awake our lives are parted,
The land of sleep than other lands
Is dearer far; for there, light-hearted,
I feel thy soft caressing hands.

And spirit-kisses falling lightly
Have power to bless, since fate's eclipse
Withholds all else. In visions nightly,
I feel the rapture of your lips.

A ROSE FOR TO-DAY.

BY CLARA E. SAMUELS.

"TELL me a story, please," said little Robbie, the only child of the pretty gentle-faced widow who was staying at the East Shore Hotel, a well-known resort on Long Island Sound.

"Once upon a time—" Maud began.

"The stage is coming down the Point!" cried one of the girls, from a hammock.

"Once upon a time," Maud repeated, "a princess sat looking out over the water, wishing—"

"I don't like that story," interrupted Robbie. "Mamma told it to me, this afternoon; and the prince never came back, although she wished it ever so long."

"But the prince of my story did, my boy," laughed Maud.

"Here is the stage," said Major West, Maud's devoted admirer. And, as he spoke, the solitary passenger alighted—a dark man, apparently in feeble health: for he came up the piazza-steps, leaning on the arm of a body-servant, and went immediately to the room for which, it seems, he had telegraphed.

"The prince has come, Robbie," whispered Maud. But she stopped suddenly, at sight of the white face of the boy's mother. What could it mean? Was there any connection, she wondered, between this newcomer and Margaret Vane's sorrow?

Whether this was so or not, from that day a change came over the shy silent widow. Before this, she had always pleaded some excuse for not joining our sailing-parties, picnics, and other excursions; but now she was the first to propose them and the last to suggest returning.

One day, when we came back, the sick stranger was seen for the first time on the piazza. He was occupying Mrs. Vane's low rocker, in a shady corner.

"Someone ought to take care of the poor fellow," said Maud to Mrs. Vane. "The night air is coming on, and he is sound asleep; it is dangerous, especially as his cough is so bad."

When the stranger woke from his sleep, half an hour after, he was surprised to find a gay-striped afghan, soft and warm, and exhaling a faint rose-perfume, thrown over him.

"I will not trouble you long—not long," he murmured, as if still half unconscious. And he rose and moved feebly away.

The next morning broke cold and rainy, with

a high wind. All day, the invalid occupied a seat near the fire which had been kindled in the public sitting-room. He spoke but little. Often, his eyes wandered to little Robbie, who played about; and, once or twice, they furtively sought Mrs. Vane. When evening came, Margaret was asked to sing, for all knew how fine her voice was. She sat down and began to play. At first, the notes throbbed with the sound of victory after a long and wearisome march; then a waltz, softly, dreamily played, followed; and one had only to close one's eyes to see a lighted room and the figures swaying in rhythmic time with the music.

"Mamma, please sing your pretty song," Robbie called: "the 'Rose Song.'"

The sick guest stirred uneasily in his chair by the fire.

Mrs. Vane hesitated for a moment, then played the prelude, tender and low and sorrowfully sweet, and afterward sang, in her wonderful way, these quaint words:

What flower shall I wear, my love to show?
A lily pale—a lily? Ah, no!
For yesterday's dead, when lilies did blow.

A pansy sweet—a pansy? Ah, no!
For summer will come and summer will go,
And pansies will blossom beneath the snow.

A flow'r for to day, my love to show—
A deep-red rose, that brightly will glow
And will tell my love that I love him so.

During the singing, the face of the stranger wore an expression of utter weariness. The eyes were closed. "Can it be," Maud thought, "that the end is so near? Major West says so. Perhaps, to-morrow, the windows will be darkened, and we who laugh to-night will tread softly and talk in whispers of the dead man."

When Margaret arose from the piano, she too saw the white face, with the strange look upon it. A great tear, at that moment, dropped from the closed eyelids and fell upon the thin hand.

She crossed the room with a hurried step and knelt by the invalid's side.

"Robert!" she cried, "Robert! my husband!" Oh, the pathos of that cry! "You are dying, and have no word for me! Yet you have tears for our little song!"

He opened his eyes and looked at her eagerly.

"Not tears for the song, Margaret, but for the cruel years that have slipped between," he said. "and have taken from me my wife and child."

"Oh, Robert! Robert!" she exclaimed, in a voice in which incredulity and tenderness mingled with a pathos which no words could describe.

"No man ever more highly prized his treasures than I did mine," he went quickly on, answering the passionate appeal in her tone. "How could you distrust me? Oh, Margaret! Margaret! How was it possible that, even for a moment, you could doubt my love?"

"Robert, what was I to think—how could I help doubting?" she cried, with a rush of hot tears. "Oh, forgive me if I have wronged you—forgive me!"

"You wronged your own heart as sorely as mine," he answered, laying his hand softly on her bowed head. "I see that now—now when it is too late."

"No! no!" she groaned. "It is not too late—it shall not be!"

"Hush!" he said, with a slow painful smile. "It is not for you or me to decide or rebel against; whatever the burden, our duty is plain—to bear it as patiently as we can."

"It is too hard—too hard!" she sighed.

"Nothing is too hard when the sorrow is not of our own causing," he replied.

"But this is my work, you say," she cried. "Oh, if I had been more patient—if I had only waited—only waited!"

"Yes; you might have trusted me."

"I had—I had—until—until—"

Her voice broke; her eyes were raised to his face for an instant; then her head sank again on the arm of the chair.

"You would have only had to wait a day longer," he said, in a repressed difficult voice.

"A day? Only one day?"

"Only that, Margaret—only that."

"Oh, this is too terrible!" she exclaimed. "And I cannot understand—I cannot!"

"When I reached home, you were gone," the husband continued, in the same choked difficult tone. "Now Robbie has completely forgotten me—completely; and you—"

"They told me you were not coming—and I thought they knew!" she interrupted.

"They?" he repeated, with a sudden thrill of passion in his tone.

"Yes—your own relatives!"

"Only one of my relatives, I think, Margaret," was the rather cold response.

"Oh, Robert—my husband!" she cried again, with passionate yearning and regret. "I only began to think there might be a mistake when your cousin sent for me, in her last illness."

"She made no confession?"

"She could not talk connectedly; the few broken explanations she attempted were so vague that I could not catch them; and—and—"

"Well, Margaret, well?"

"Oh, I suppose my terrible pride stood in the way," she sobbed. "I could not be sure that I had been mistaken. I could not go back without one word from you—I might have found my presence unwelcome. I did think of trying—I did!—but that fear restrained me, held me fast. Oh, I knew that to see you and find I was not wanted would drive me mad."

He lifted her head with his frail hand and looked into her face, while a smile of heavenly sweetness illumined his own.

"Margaret, I love you now, and I loved you then."

What did it all mean? She was not a widow, then; but had parted from her husband, and in anger.

We all rose, as by one impulse, and left the room: left them together, husband and wife and child.

Afterward, when the happy reconciliation was complete, we who had learned to know and love Margaret Vane heard the whole story of the misunderstanding which had resulted in such long years of separation and misery to the pair who had loved each other devotedly in spite of their foolish pride and hastiness.

Mrs. Vane sent for Maud, to whom she had always felt most closely drawn, and, with trembling lips and eyes in which joy and peace shone through tears, told the tenderly sympathizing girl the whole sorrowful story.

"We were very young, both of us, and I—I behaved like a silly child; but I have been bitterly punished for my folly—surely it was nothing more. I meant to do right," said Margaret.

"I am sure you did," Maud answered, consolingly. "And now all is well—never mind the unhappy past."

"Ah! but it is difficult to forget, and besides I must explain. Robert was not to blame—it was my fault and—his cousin's."

Maud gently pressed the speaker's hand as she paused an instant, almost overcome.

"You see," went on Margaret, "she had loved him, poor thing, all her life. She was terribly angry when he married me, but she did not allow me to see that. I trusted and loved her. Robert went away unexpectedly—it was not his own affair, but somebody else's trouble—a friend's."

Mrs. Vane stopped a moment, almost overcome

by the thought of her cruel misjudgment, while Maud whispered :

"Do not tell me. I know it is all right."

The other shook her head and continued :

"He was detained longer than he expected to be. His cousin told me he was never coming back—that—that he had left me forever—gone," her voice broke, "with someone whom he loved better. I could not bear it, so I took Robbie and went away in my anger. I had enough to live on, and, when Robert came back, he believed what his cousin told him of me. Ah! it was too dreadful!"

"He will live now," Major West said to Maud, as they separated for the night.

Again the morning dawned, but now a sunny sky was overhead. We were awaiting the arrival of the stage, in which Maud was to leave.

"I knew you understood," Margaret was

saying to her, "the night you told me Robert would never get well if not better cared for."

"And I was quite sure that I was indeed cared for," her husband broke in, with a smile, lifting a corner of the shawl which was folded across his lap.

"We are to have a cottage of our own here, next summer, and you must come and visit us then." And, looking into wee Robbie's pleading brown eyes, what could Maud answer but "Yes"?

Major West now approached, holding a crimson rose, which he held out to Maud.

"Lilies for yesterday, pansies for to-morrow, but roses for to-day," he said. "Will you wear it for me, Maud?"

And, for answer, she fastened it in her shining braids of hair, and smiled back at him as he escorted her to the stage.

MY NEW-YEAR EVE.

BY M. A. O'NEILL.

'Tis New-Year Eve; bright, keen, and cold,
The earth is covered deep with snow,
And bells chime on the frosty air,
Recalling scenes of long ago.

Each tree and bush is robed with white,
And earth is clad in pure array.
The stars are drifting o'er the sky,
The New Year comes with royal sway.

The chiming bells ring out the old;
I sit here bidding it farewell,
And thinking all that life may hold
Before is heard its funeral knell.

The old year's dead; and, musing here,
I think of all time bore away.
Though weary years have passed since then,
My loss seems none the less to-day.

For, as I list with throbbing heart,
I think of happy days gone by—
Of sunny heads that nestled here,
Then left me lone, to dwell on high.

Their little mounds are far away,
And, side by side, I see them lie;

The prairie roses o'er them grow,
The wintry winds sweep coldly by.

Sing softly by those little graves,
Where birds sing in the summer air,
And winter snows fall gently down,
Enfolding them with tender care.

And, oft as comes the New Year's birth,
These memories carry me afar;
I lift my tear-dimmed eyes from earth,
And gaze beyond, through gates ajar.

For, oh! I know they watch for me,
Those angel forms I once called mine;
Around God's throne they joined the band
That sing of love divine.

No more I doubt, as once of yore—
I know that all God's ways are best;
And some day, for the cross I bear,
He'll give me joy and rest.

Some day, some morn, I'll greet my own,
The ones redeemed who went before;
For, as I watch on earth for them,
They wait for me beyond time's shore.

IF.

BY E. L. MACOMB BRISTOL.

If a heart does beat itself to death
For loving thee, can such things be?
Nay, it would wish for breath
To live again and suffer pain.

If sleep did come and last for aye,
Dreams would come and plague you some;
And, if awake, you would plead and sigh
For the distress that would bring cares.